

Statement of Marta Daniels in Support of House Bill 5285
An Act Concerning the Public School Curriculum
March 4, 2022

To the Education Committee:

Because of the urgency of the threat posed by climate change, I believe teaching about it in the public schools statewide should not be an elective beginning in middle school, but rather, a requirement, and should start early in the education process. HB 5285, would do just that.

Connecticut has already adopted science standards under Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) that call for the option of teaching about climate change, but no tally is kept of schools who do, nor at which levels. It is haphazard and left to chance. One thing that is clear: climate change is happening here and now and it threatens our safety, our health and our property. Oceans continue to rise from massive melts in key parts of the planet. Record droughts, wildfires, floods, blistering heat waves, violent storms, and other extreme weather events will continue—and even increase substantially—all while politicians have failed to understand the urgent nature of this threat.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change just released another devastating report verifying this. Prepared by 270 scientists from 67 countries. It draws on thousands of scientific studies. It shows us the world as it is: already hotter than a century ago. It implores us to adapt, and quickly, so that the future is livable. (Read the report [here](#).) If responsible governments backed by informed citizens do not soon act, it will be too late to prevent a reversal in our earth's living habitat.

There is a critical loophole under the CT education statute (10-16b) that says schools must teach science in accordance with NGSS standards, but it also states that it “may include... climate change...” To close that loophole, I support changing the word “may” to “shall.” For the current generation of youngsters, it could be a matter of life or death. They are owed the tools they need to make the wise choices required to prevent catastrophe. Our generation may have failed out of ignorance, greed or malice, but theirs could be the last to have our luxury. Knowledge is their best protection: as informed citizens, they will not be so quick or willing to make the mistakes of prior generations.

For those who adamantly reject making climate change teaching a requirement, I quote the reply of the proponent of this bill, Rep. Christine Palm: “I’d love to see poetry be mandated. That’s never going to happen, but then, *that’s not life or death.*”

I have testified twice on behalf of strengthening climate change education. I testify again in support of this, in the form of HB 5285. I urge you to support this bill. Thank you for considering my statement.

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